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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2020
TAGS: PGOV PARM PHUM AJ IR
SUBJECT: IRAN: JAFARI REPORTEDLY SLAPS AHMEDINEJAD AT SNSC
MEETING; TUDEH RE-EMERGING?

REF: A. A) 2009 BAKU 972
¶B. B) 2009 BAKU 921
¶C. C) 2009 BAKU 920 (NOTAL)
¶D. D) 2009 BAKU 909

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Rob Garverick, for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (S) Baku Iran watcher met with an Iranian opposition journalist and former political prisoner (protect) who has demonstrated a wide range of Iranian political and governmental contacts (including relatives). The contact has been known to Iran watcher for over a year, and has reportedly accurately on several sensitive political and economic issues in the past. His network includes individuals in positions to possess knowledge of aspects of Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) deliberations (strictly protect - see reftels).

He who Got Slapped

¶2. (S) According to source, President Ahmedinejad surprised other SNSC members by taking a surprisingly liberal posture during a mid January post-Ashura meeting of the SNSC called to discuss next steps on dealing with opposition protests. Source said that Ahmedinejad claimed that "people feel suffocated," and mused that to defuse the situation it may be necessary to allow more personal and social freedoms, including more freedom of the press.

¶3. (S) According to source, Ahmedinejad's statements infuriated Revolutionary Guard Chief of Staff Mohammed Ali Jafari, who exclaimed "You are wrong! (In fact) it is YOU who created this mess! And now you say give more freedom to the press?!" Source said that Jafarli then slapped Ahmedinejad in the face, causing an uproar and an immediate call for a break in the meeting, which was never resumed. Source said that SNSC did not meet again for another two weeks, after Ayatollah Janati successfully acted as a "peacemaker" between Jafarli and Ahmedinejad. Source added that the break in the SNSC meeting, but not the slap that caused it, has made its way on to some Iranian blogs.

Sides Preparing for New Confrontations

¶4. (S) Meanwhile, source said, both sides are digging in for new confrontations, while various sub-groups maneuver. He stressed the importance of recent speeches by Karroubi and Khatami to the effect that Ahmedinejad will not be able finish his term, and that Supreme Leaders should not take partisan political sides. He stressed that "Karroubi chooses

each word carefully," and aid the recent speeches reflect an ongoing effort to split Khamenei from the Ahmadinejad group. Source described the overall political situation within and without the political elite as "getting worse and worse." He opined that this situation (of protests and instability) cannot be sustained indefinitely, and predicted that events are trending towards major developments and a new phases. Asked what Iran will likely look like over the next year, he responded "ask me after 22 Bahman (February 11)."

Tudeh Activists Re-Emerging?

¶ 15. (S) Source (a former non-Marxist revolutionary activist) also asserted that the Iranian Tudeh (communist) party is reorganizing among factory and government workers, and intellectuals. He claimed that many former Tudeh sympathizers hold positions in the bureaucracy and elsewhere, and opined that many still privately support the movement. He mentioned one "Osanlu" as a veteran Tudeh organizer who has re-emerged behind the scenes of recent bus worker and other labor strikes.

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